As delivered

Admiral Thomas H. Collins
Kenwood Citizens Association
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Kenwood Country Club

Good evening friends and neighbors! It's a pleasure to be with you tonight and to officially greet our newest Kenwood residents – welcome aboard and welcome to the neighborhood!

Let me start by taking a couple minutes to go over some Coast Guard fundamentals, so everyone has a basic "working knowledge" of the Coast Guard.

[SLIDE 1: CG 101/OUR ORGANIZATIONAL "DNA")

We trace our roots back to 1790, when Treasury Secretary Alexander Hamilton created the Revenue Marine by commissioning ten cutters to enforce our new nation's laws on the water. In the 213 years since, we've merged with other government agencies – such as the Lifesaving Service, the Lighthouse Service, and the Steamboat Inspection Service – to become today's Coast Guard. Our transfer in March of this year to the Department of Homeland Security is the second time we've moved to a new department – in 1967, we moved from our original Department, Treasury, to the then-newly established Department of Transportation.

[SLIDE 2: CG PEOPLE & ASSETS]

So who and what make the Coast Guard tick?

We've been growing in numbers lately – we're up to 39,000 active duty members – about 80% are enlisted and 20% officers. We also rely greatly on our Reservists and civilian employees to get the job done. Additionally, we're blessed to have the Coast Guard Auxiliary – a group of civilian volunteers who help the active duty folks perform

the Coast Guard's many missions. Some of you who are boat owners may know the Auxiliary because you've had a courtesy inspection done by them, or know someone who has.

[SLIDE 3: CG ASSETS]

These 90,000 people perform the Coast Guard's missions, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and 365 days a year, using Coast Guard cutters, small boats, planes, and helicopters. Our fleet includes our largest cutters, WHECs, or high endurance cutters, medium endurance cutters, buoy tenders, patrol boats, ice breakers, and a number of different boats. We use jets, prop planes, and helicopters to get our job done. Some of our helicopters are armed with rifles and machine guns – used to stop drug smugglers on the water and for our homeland security mission.

[SLIDE 4: CG ORGANIZATION AREAS & DISTRICTS]

And where would you find all these people?

Our Headquarters are in southwest Washington DC; our field units are divided into two regions, Atlantic Area, based in Portsmouth, VA, and Pacific Area, in Alameda, CA. Each Area has several Districts working for them – Atlantic Area includes our District Offices located in Boston, Portsmouth, Miami, Cleveland, and New Orleans; Pacific Area includes our Districts headquartered in Alameda, Seattle, Juneau, and Honolulu. And working for each district, we have our Marine Safety Offices, Groups, Air Stations, Small Boat Stations, and Cutters.

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[SLIDE 5: CG MISSIONS]

And so what do all these people spread around the country do with those cutters and boats and planes and helos?

As you might guess from our history and the merging together of various government agencies, our missions are varied and wide-ranging.

Since our earliest days as the Revenue Marine, maritime security has been one of our missions. The attacks of September 11th and our transfer to the Department of Homeland Security have certainly emphasized the homeland security side of this mission area for us, but it has always been one of our primary jobs. Additionally, we prevent illegal drugs from making it to our shores and to our streets and we prevent illegal migrants from entering our country. Our law enforcement authority makes us unique among the five armed services -- we are the only branch of the military that also has civil law enforcement authority.

Maritime Safety is the mission area many people know us best by – our role in maritime Search and Rescue even earns us a place in Hollywood. The movie, "The Perfect Storm", was based on real events, including the Coast Guard rescue depicted in it – although the movie did downplay our role in rescuing the civilian sailboaters. Obviously, the director didn't consult me when he was making the film!

Under Maritime Mobility, we ensure safe waterways for all who use our waters – from the smallest recreational boaters to the largest cargo ships – and everyone in between. You can tell our buoy tenders – most of our cutters have white hulls, but our buoy tenders – or "working boats" as they like to be known – have black hulls . . . the better to hide a scuff or two as they lift buoys out of the water and onto their decks.

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Our Protection of Natural Resources mission includes enforcing the laws preventing the over-fishing of our waters and also the prevention and clean-up of oil spills. I'm sure you remember the Exxon Valdez oil spill in Alaska in 1989 -- the Coast Guard led the federal clean-up operations there. Since then, we have been called on by other nations who have suffered large oil spills, requesting our expertise and "lessons learned" to help them with their clean-up efforts.

Our National Defense role is one that also dates back to the earliest days of our history. We have fought in every one of our country's wars, starting with the Quasi-War with France of 1797 and including both World Wars, the Korean War, the Vietnam War, the Gulf War, and most recently, in Iraq. We deployed Coast Guard forces to execute Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom as America's superb military and our coalition partners liberated Iraq from a tyrant. Deployed Coast Guard Forces included 2 High Endurance Cutters, 8 Patrol Boats, a Buoy Tender, 4 Port Security Units and a total of 1250 Coast Guard men and women, all sent overseas in support of those Operations. Our Coast Guard ships ensured safe transit of the armament and supplies needed to prosecute the war. We ensured safe shipping lanes were marked, then maintained. We guarded aircraft carriers and minesweepers. We boarded suspected smugglers. We located and secured a large Iraqi military equipment and weapons cache hidden in caves in southern Iraq. We intercepted fugitives attempting to flee Iraq by sea. We captured Iraqi POWs. And today, we continue to serve overseas, as 350 of our Coast Guard men and women remain far from home, continuing to support the U.S. mission there.

So now that you have some basic Coast Guard knowledge, let me expand a little on our homeland security mission.

[SLIDE 6: THE SHIELD OF FREEDOM]

I'll wrap things up by assuring you that the Coast Guard is out there, protecting our 95,000 miles of coast line, and protecting America from those who would threaten

her – whether it's smuggler trying to sneak drugs into the county or a terrorist wanting to do us harm. We are America's Shield of Freedom.

I look forward to talking to you individually over coffee – but now, it's time to eat! Thank you very much.